

Tuesday 17th March 2020

Dear Friends,

This is an important letter. Please do take some time to read it.

I've been using words like "unprecedented" a lot recently, and this letter is no different. In the light of government and national Church advice around "non-essential contact", as of today we are saying that public services will be suspended until further notice. This feels the only responsible and wise response as we face the challenge of coronavirus over these next days, weeks and months.

I want to invite us to three different things these next days together.

The life of prayer



I'm asking us all to commit to being a people of prayer these next days and weeks. You will find on our website and social media channels a 28 page A5 booklet we have produced with short prayers and scripture, a suggested morning / noon / night time of prayer, and the daily bible readings set. Please use that and enjoy it as a gift. Paper copies are available at the Trinity Centre, Holy Trinity Church, Café Connect etc, or we would be delighted to send you a paper copy if you would rather. Let us know. Alongside that we will be sending regular emails with other resources to help sustain personal prayer.

Meanwhile this coming **Sunday 22nd March**, sees a national day of prayer and action, especially remembering those who are sick or anxious, and all involved in health and emergency services. As one action, we are calling on everyone to light a candle in their window at 7pm as a sign of solidarity and hope in the light of Christ that can never be extinguished. Please join in.

The call to worship



The suspension of public worship means that there will not be any Sunday services at Holy Trinity, Christ the King or the Meet Place. So, to be clear, at Holy Trinity the 9am, 1045 and 630pm public services will not take place. Neither will there be a service at 1030am in Radbrook and the 11am monthly service on the Meole Estate. We have also made the sad but necessary decision to stop almost all midweek activities, groups and ministries, and whilst the Trinity Centre and Café remain open for the time being their activities will be scaled back.

However that does not mean that "church has closed":

- **We will make every effort for there to be a livestreamed act of worship from Holy Trinity Church every Sunday morning at 10.30am.** This will be led by a very small group of people at Holy Trinity. We will make a 'service sheet' available online and via email, and will livestream the service via our Facebook page. For those able to access online resources we do encourage you to join in with this, take part in online conversations, and for that to be a part of our mutual belonging and life together. Please do connect up with our "Trinity Churches Shrewsbury" facebook page now.

- **Holy Trinity Church will be open every day for quiet prayer.** There are advantages of having a large building, which means that small numbers of people will be able to come and be quiet, to pray, and to be in a familiar surroundings. We're also going to be installing some prayer stations in the churchyard for those who would rather be outside and pray.

We recognise that for those who are in isolation at home this option will not be open to them. If you feel unwell then we ask you, please, not to attend, and will be encouraging appropriate social distancing for those who do join us for these times. There will be some ideas of prayer and worship which we hope to keep 'fresh' as the next days and weeks go on. If you are able to do then please may we encourage you to join in.

We expect for this daily arrangement to begin on **Thursday 19th March**, and the current provisional "open church" times include:

Mondays 6pm to 7pm	Tuesdays 10.30am to 11.30am
Wednesdays 7.30am to 8.30am	Thursdays 10am to 11am
Fridays 12pm to 1pm	Saturdays 9am to 11am
Sundays 6.30pm to 7.30pm	

The Church Office will continue to be open 9am to 3pm each day, albeit on a scaled back staffing. So we expect you will also be able to access church during these times by entry through the Trinity Centre.

Serving and caring



Now is the time, more than ever, to show God's love for the world. We're being invited to be a "church for all, not just the church for ourselves." If you are able we urge you to get involved yourselves in some of the neighbourhood projects seeking to support those who are housebound, shop for those who are self-isolating, and to join in what is already happening near you. And where possible we will continue our work in the community, particularly with those who are vulnerable, and we hope that some of our mission in the Meet Place and Café Connect will be able to continue to be a presence locally. Look out for other ways in which you can support and get involved with others.

We have also set up a dedicated phone line for people across the parish, and to be made known to others as well. If you would like a listening ear, a friendly voice down the phone or to seek support in particular ways, we do invite you to make use of that. The number is 01743 357711, and it will be monitored each day by a member of the ministry leadership team.

On top of that we are putting into place a congregation-based system of phone and pastoral support. This will differ by congregations in exactly how this works, and I will be working with colleagues, congregational leadership teams and PCC members to oversee this. For those in small groups already I trust that there will already be some good levels of support and encouragement, but this is particularly for those who would appreciate an extra layer of pastoral support over what might be a difficult few weeks ahead. These are uncertain times, and we want to be in the forefront of providing practical care and support for many people in the church and community who are going to suffer during these coming months as the coronavirus reaches its peak.

In conclusion, we have been learning a lot these last years about "everyday faith", and how discipleship is so much more than an hour on a Sunday. This unprecedented move will prove how much we really mean that, as we face the challenge of becoming a radically different kind of church rooted in prayer and serving others. As the Archbishops say in their open letter, this is far from "Shutting up Shop", but rather of more fully being people of faith, hope and love in our everyday lives and across Shrewsbury and beyond. The ways in which we are doing and being church will look different into the future.

I will seek to keep people as in-the-loop as I can in what remains a fast-moving situation. In the meantime do please be in touch directly with me if you'd like to talk more, or have particular concerns. With my prayers, as always, for "Grace and peace" in this time ahead.

Revd Phil Cansdale, Vicar of Meole Brace and
Area Dean of Shrewsbury on behalf of the Staff Team and PCC